

# Housing (Scotland) Bill Stage 1 Debate Briefing

November 24

## Our position

Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) supports the introduction of the Housing Bill to the Scottish Parliament and is keen to work with all parties to help the Bill realise its full potential. Homes are the foundation of people's lives and in a just and compassionate Scotland, everyone should have access to a secure, high quality and sustainable home. Improving the rented sector is fundamental to this.

Our evidence from the network of bureaux across Scotland tells us that finding and affording a rented home is becoming increasingly difficult, and many people are living precariously in homes which are unaffordable or in poor condition.

We know that affordability issues continue to affect both tenants and landlords, with rising costs often making staying in the private rented sector unsustainable for certain individuals in both groups. This Bill has significant potential to help people to stay in the homes they already have, and reduce homelessness as a result.

We want to ensure that tenants and landlords are aware of and empowered by their respective rights and responsibilities as well as ensuring that those landlords who fulfil their responsibilities are supported to remain in the sector.

Critical to the Bill's success are the interwoven golden threads of **data, enforcement and resources**.

- > **Data:** there must be better collection of data about the private rented sector to inform the best possible policymaking. This will be a long process to set up and must be done as a matter of priority.
- > **Enforcement:** local authorities need to be empowered to effectively enforce against bad practice in the sector. The section on damages for unlawful eviction in the Bill is a key mechanism here.
- > **Resources:** both data and enforcement require robust funding to be effective. The Scottish Government must ensure that costs are fully explored, and funding is adequate to cover the full costs of implementation.

## Our evidence

Last year, the Citizens Advice network in Scotland gave out over **53,000 pieces of housing advice**, which accounted for around **5% of all advice**. Housing advice was often sought in tandem with other areas of advice such as benefits, debt and utilities.

- > **Rents:** The tenure that we give most housing advice on continues to be the private rented sector (PRS), at around 21% of all housing advice. Advice on PRS rents made up 11% of all PRS advice, averaging around 320 pieces of advice per quarter last year. New statistics for Q2 of 2024/25 show that, compared to the same period in 2023/24, advice on private sector rents increased by 45%. Views of our advice webpage “The landlord wants to increase the rent” also increased by just under 50%.
- > **Illegal eviction:** Demand for advice on illegal or unlawful eviction in the PRS has been growing over the last two years, averaging around 4% of all PRS advice, or over 100 pieces of advice per quarter. New statistics for Q2 show a small drop in the volume of advice given on this area, but numbers remain worryingly high given the damaging impact of illegal eviction.

---

## Janet and Paula’s experiences



An East of Scotland CAB has recently worked with a client Janet<sup>1</sup> who lives with her pre-school age child in private rented accommodation. Her rent is £1,400, which is the majority of her £1,615 Universal Credit payment. She is actively looking for work around her daughter’s childcare, but is accumulating council tax arrears and is struggling to pay for the basics.



An East of Scotland CAB has recently worked with a client Paula who is renting privately but has no tenancy agreement. She pays the landlord in cash and they appear to be unregistered. Paula is on a low income and can’t afford her rent but is unable to claim housing benefit due to having no tenancy agreement.

---

<sup>1</sup> No real names have been used and picture posed by models



## Next steps

In the months since the Bill was introduced, there has been the opportunity to digest and understand the Bill. There are undoubtedly areas that would benefit from the introduction of amendments at Stage 2, and further consideration given to overarching enforcement, resourcing and data questions. Nonetheless, we believe that this Bill has the potential to drastically improve outcomes in the private rented sector for both tenants and landlords, **and so we call on MSPs to support the Bill at Stage 1.**

---

Citizens Advice Scotland, our 59-member Citizen Advice Bureaux (CAB) and the Extra Help Unit, form Scotland's largest independent advice network. Scotland's Citizens Advice Network is an essential community service that empowers people through our local bureaux and national services by providing free, confidential and independent advice. We use people's real-life experiences to influence policy and drive positive change. We are on the side of people in Scotland who need help, and we change lives for the better.


**For more information or to set up a meeting, please contact**  
Aoife Deery, Senior Social Justice Policy Officer, [Aoife.deery@cas.org.uk](mailto:Aoife.deery@cas.org.uk)

---

[www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk)

 @CitAdviceScot

 CitizensAdviceScotland

 citizens-advice-scotland

The Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux - Citizens Advice Scotland.  
Scottish charity (SC016637) and company limited by guarantee (89892)